

State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



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COMMISSION ON CHILDREN

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An Eye-Opening Report on the Social State of Connecticut

HARTFORD—How is the “social health” Connecticut? Getter better in some areas, worse in others, according to the latest edition of the Connecticut Index of Social Health, released today by the Connecticut Commission on Children.

The Index, produced annually since 1994 by the General Assembly, the Commission on Children, and the William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund, provides an overview of the social health of the state based on 11 indicators of social well-being.

In the new edition—based on 2003 data, the most recent available—puts Connecticut’s overall health at 66 on a scale of 0 to 100, with 100 being a perfect score. The score dropped 1 point from the previous year’s total.

The indicators used included rates of infant mortality, child abuse, youth suicide, high school dropouts, teenage births, unemployment, violent crime, and income variation, along with average weekly wages, healthcare costs, and affordable housing costs.

“The Index reveals that our state has improved significantly in average weekly wages and students completing high school, while the rates of infant mortality and teen parenting continue to fall,” Commission on Children Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman said. “Child abuse, however, has worsened significantly, and healthcare costs have skyrocketed to their highest levels.”

In addition, this year’s Index contains a special look at the juvenile justice system in Connecticut, initiated and funded by Tow Foundation.

(continued)

Key data

Here are some of the most important findings of the report:

Infant mortality

- In 2003, the Connecticut infant mortality rate was 5.3 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, the best rate on record since 1970.
- The rate among blacks improved for the second year in a row, but black infant mortality remains more than double the rate of white infant mortality.

Child abuse

- In 2003, the state's child abuse rate worsened for the fourth time in the last five years. A total of 50,115 children were referred in cases of child abuse, an increase of more than 4,400 children from the previous year.
- The 2003 child abuse rate, 59.6 reports per 1,000 children under 18, was 10 percent worse than the previous year's rate of 54.3.

Youth suicide

- The 2003 youth suicide rate in Connecticut, of 5.3 deaths per 100,000, was the lowest since 1972.
- The vast majority of youth suicide victims were white and male.

High school dropouts

- In 2003, the high school dropout rate improved to its best on record since 1970.
- The cumulative four-year high school dropout rate of 9.5 percent achieved by the graduating class of 2003 represented the ninth consecutive year of improvement.
- In 2003, the annual high school dropout rate among black and Hispanic students was more than double the rate among white students.

Teenage births

- In 2003, the birth rate among women, ages 15-19, remained stable, matching last year's record low of 25.8 births per 1,000.
- In 2003, the number of births to women under age 15 improved for the third year in a row, dropping to 39.

Unemployment

- In 2003, the unemployment rate increased for the third year in a row, 5.5 percent.

- Unemployment rates remain disproportionately high among blacks, Hispanics, and youth.

Average weekly wages

- Average weekly wages among factory production workers, measured in constant dollars, increased slightly in 2003.
- The manufacturing sector continues to shrink as a proportion of the state's work force.

Healthcare costs

- The proportion of personal income spent on health in 2003 was 14.7 percent, establishing a new worst on-record level, surpassing the costliest years of the early 1990s.
- The percentage of the state's non-elderly population without health insurance decreased slightly in 2003 to 12.0 percent.

Violent crime

- The violent crime rate in Connecticut improved in 2003 for the sixth time in the last seven years.
- The number of hate crimes increased by 49 percent between 2002 and 2003.

Affordable housing

- In 2003, a single-family home cost 5.2 times the state per capita personal income, an increase for the fourth year in a row.
- Connecticut's rental market remains among the most expensive in the nation.

Income variation

- In 2003 the distance between the income of the state's highest-income county and its lowest-income county increased for the fifth time in the past six years.
- The state's population living below the poverty level improved slightly, dropping to 8.1 percent in 2003.

Juvenile justice

- Arrests of young people in Connecticut have declined significantly over the past decade, both for all crimes and for violent crimes. This pattern is observable both among children under 16 and in the larger under-18 age-group.
- The number of young people in the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and in the state's correctional facilities also has declined. Alternatively, referrals to juvenile court and total detention admissions have both increased during the past decade.

The full Index may be downloaded from the Commission on Children's website, at cga.ct.gov/coc/.